

Retrenchment Series

Facilitating Consortium and Consolidation  
Discussions

No. 25

April 1982

Larry Hirschhorn

Management and Behavioral  
Science Center

University of Pennsylvania

## INTRODUCTION

The staff of many legal service programs are asking whether they ought to enter into consolidation and consortium arrangements with other programs in their region. The process of developing such arrangements is a complex one and requires much time, effort and planning. In working with groups of programs we have discovered that an initial two and-half day planning session can be helpful in establishing the key issues, relationships and climate for a consortium/consolidation planning effort. In the following paper I want to outline the key "design elements" of a two and a half day planning session. Directors and others can use this paper to help them develop and design the first stages of consortium discussions. The paper is divided into two sections. The first presents the different tools and exercises that participants and facilitators can use in developing a conference design, the second examines more general conceptual themes that can help directors and others think about consortium development strategies.

### I

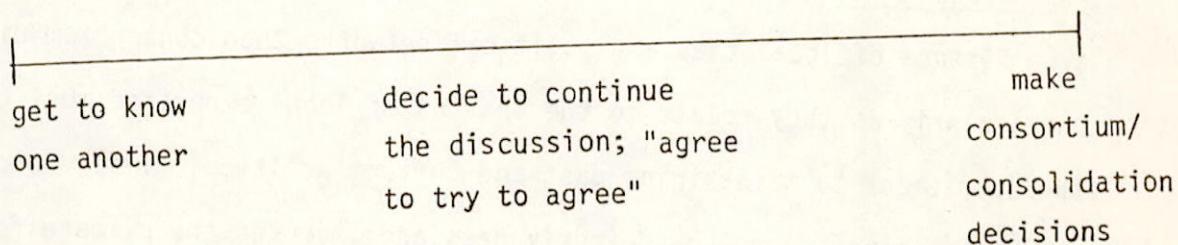
#### First Stage

The first stage of a consortium conference should be organized to introduce participants to one another and clarify their joint understanding of the socio-political environment they share. I have found that it is helpful to begin one central question: "From my perspective, how might this conference fail?" The group can discuss this question using the nominal group technique to build a list of expectations for success and failure.\* The list will most likely contain a broad range of answers ("the conference will fail if politics gets in the way, if we don't make concrete decisions, if we cannot trust one another, if we don't learn more about each other's programs, etc.), reflecting the different levels of commitment that people are bringing to the discussion. I have found it helpful to end this discussion with the following exercise:

---

\* See Appendix II

1. Look at the following line. The left end reflects the expectation that this conference is primarily organized to help people understand one another better. The right end reflects the expectation that this conference is organized so that program leaders will actually make consortium consolidation decisions at the conference. The middle represents the expectation that the programs represented here today will decide that it is worth continuing the consortium discussions beyond the next two days and will develop some process for insuring that they do so.

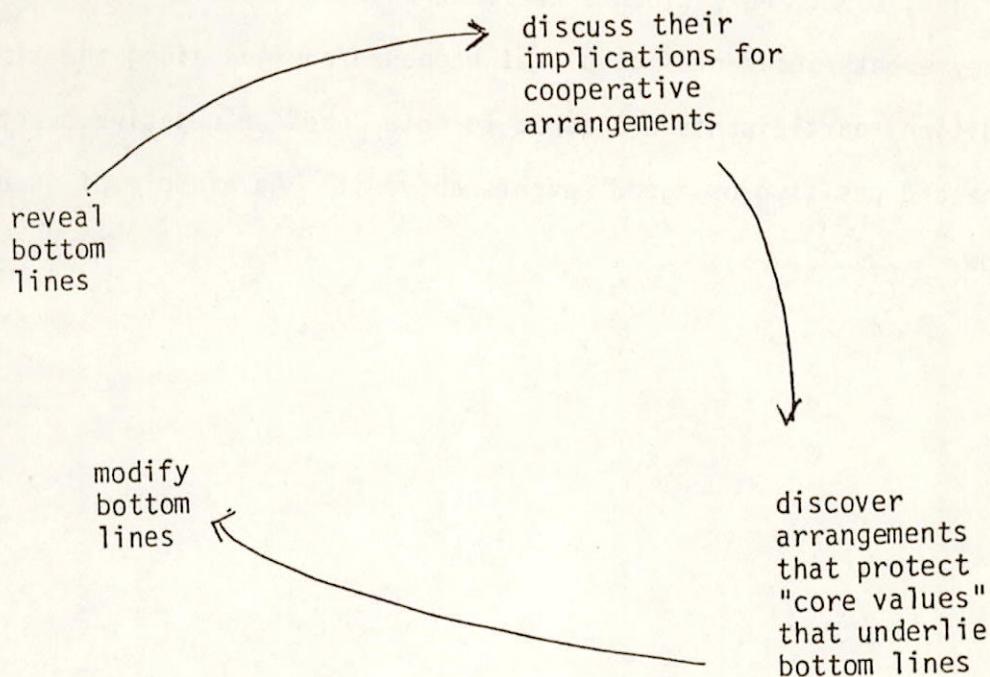


I then ask people to place a tic mark showing where they stand. The distribution of marks then represents a visual summary of what people expect from the conference, what commitment they bring to it, and what will disappoint them. With information presented in this paper and visual way a participant will know where others stand, where he or she stands relative to others, and how he or she can gauge the progress of the conference. Thus for example, in one conference I facilitated with my team, participants noted that they "would now shift their marks to the right" as the discussion itself created a sense of momentum and group understanding of the shared environment of threats and opportunities.

Facilitators and others may wish to experiment with an additional opening process tool. If we conceptualize such conferences as parts of longer run negotiations processes, it is helpful to have participants list what they believe their "bottom lines" to be, what would they find most difficult to give up. Again, the list building process can be done through the nominal group technique. Typically, people will mention such things, "our autonomy as an independent program, "our main office," our local ties to key county coalitions."

Specifying bottom lines facilitates discussion in three ways. First, it can help clarify the initial boundaries of the discussion, If most participants mention program autonomy as a bottom line then consolidation discussions in the beginning are clearly out of order. Similarly, if many mention the significance of local ties and political networks then consortium discussions, particularly as they relate to the sharing of legal expertise must confront the commitment to maintaining past and current political ties. Second, specifying bottom lines decreases defensiveness and improves the climate for talking. If people feel they must protect some dimension of their program but have not had the chance to express their concern (or fear that they would look like obstructionists, if they did mention it) they will introduce their concerns indirectly. They may believe that another participant is talking about an issue which impinges on their bottom line and will then defend that bottom line obliquely. The conversation will become stiff and obscure and people will consequently feel more defensive. Third, if all members are aware of each other's bottom line, they may be able to more directly develop ideas about conditions, designs or arrangements under which the stated bottom lines no longer function as absolute constraints. Thus for example, a director may state that "program autonomy" is his or her bottom line, but discover through conversation that he or she most values having continuing access to key local

political actors. The director therefore would enter a confederation if that access were protected and supported. In other words, in negotiation, when people explicit/reveal their bottom lines, when they put their cards on the table" in the beginning of the discussion, they may modify their stated bottoms lines later. This is shown in the following diagram.



### Assessing the Shared Environment

After participants have clarified expectations and bottom lines, it is helpful for them to step back from the immediate consortium development problem and examine the shared environment in which they function. Such an assessment of their shared environment helps people clarify what they have in common, what generic goals they consider valuable (e.g., protecting the "movement" spirit of the programs) and what threats and opportunities they see in the future. Thus, just as the first set of exercises emphasizes the differences between the participants. The second set emphasizes their common purposes and shared environment..

There are three exercises which participants can use to elicit this sense of a shared past and future. First, participants can develop a time line of key events for the region or area as a whole. The time line is constructed by posting eight or ten flip chart sheets on a wall to create one long sheet. The facilitator then draws a line across the set of sheets and puts dates below the line. The date most to the left might be 1965, the date most to the right, 1982. Participants are then asked to come up to the sheet and fill in key events/incidents/ideas that happened/emerged along the time line. In addition, participants are asked to note "bad" or negative events below the line and positive or "good" events above it. An example of such a line is given below

TIME LINE

Marshall appointed

HCLAC est.

OEO-OLS

wr starts--- MEX ----- wr starts

MLS-Buffalo, (under legal aid bureau formed)

Rochester Saul Alinsky forms Fight

Chicago first legal services program est

waldberg Kelly Buffalo Student Dem.

STLS's predecessor formed

73

71

NY Welfare Flat Grants Attica - Corning Flood

Howie Phillips first reign

68

Bobbie Kennedy & Martin Luther King assassinated

Nixon Agnew Attacks on L.S.

Justice Berger

Stagnant L.S. Funding

wr dies

Civil Rights Movement

VIETNAM

NY Retaillatory Eviction Statute

Bradley Regime at LSC Civil Rights atty. fee act Tito Regime

Gulp Trainer

All county LSC Represented STLS Spinoff

Reagan's election

1965

wr dies

Cornell hires Capowski and the flow starts

Nixon Resigns

Jamestown LSC Formed

MLS Buffalo Breaks from Legal Aid Bureau

LSC Farmworkers Project WITRLS

U.Tola

Tucker

LSC Unionization

Plant closings and layoffs

OLU reveals over H. Phillips LSC

75

Legal Aid soc. strike

JULP (1/1/74)

The composite time line can be analyzed in the following way:

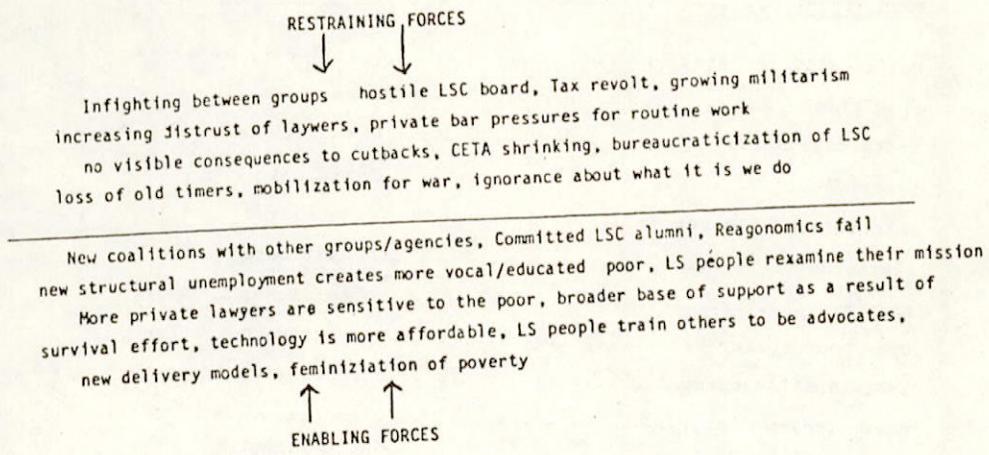
1. What is the ratio of national to local events on the time line?
2. What is the ratio of program specific to generic events on the time line (e.g., the founding of a program versus a regional election of significance)?
3. Are there any apparent cycles of good and bad events?
4. Which events were determined by the actions of legal services people? Which by others?

These questions point to some critical pattern of awareness that can shape the consortium discussion itself. Thus, the answers to question one may reveal that participants do not have an historical view of their own region and thus may not be able to effectively evaluate the regional consequences of cooperative arrangements. The answers to question two may suggest that participants have insufficient knowledge of each other's histories and may therefore be unable to assess the strengths and weaknesses of various consortium arrangements. (They may use the conference to develop this knowledge). Question three may help participants situate their current resource dilemma in a larger frame of legal services history. In doing so they may be able to evaluate and modify past strategic responses (e.g., setting up the corporation itself in response to Nixon's attack on DEO) as they try to develop strategies appropriate to the current situation. Finally, the answer to question four may help participants understand how legal service staff, boards, and others may more proactively shape the trends and forces that are organizing the movement's future. In short, the time line and the questions can

1. create a sense of a shared history
2. clarify the relationship between local and national events
3. clarify the relationships between strategic choices and the evaluation of the movement and corporation.

### Force Field

The participants can expand this exercise "appreciation" of their shared environment, by examining their theory of the future. This is done most simply through a "force field analysis", in which participants that are restraining the development and success of the legal services movement and forces that enable such development. The following table presents an example of these two lists, organized visually to represent a field of forces.



This force field provides a rich medium for the discussion of strategies and likely futures. Participants may wish to use it for the particular purposes of increasing their understanding of the local environment which they share by asking how each general/societal force may be translated into a local force. Thus for example, "the tax revolt" may be described in local terms as represented by a particular coalition with particular supports in certain areas, while "support from the ABA" may be described in terms of the leadership in the local bar. Finally, if participants wish to extend the discussion of this

forced field they may use it to explore or brainstorm strategies for weakening the restraining forces or strengthening the enabling ones. Such a discussion again will enrich the participants understanding of the local political ecology.

Finally, participants may wish to extend their exploration of the future in one more way. While the force field exercise enables them to explore their shared environment, a "From-Toward" lists may help them explore the evolution of program structure itself. Participants construct "from-toward" lists by positing descriptors of legal service programs in the recent past, e.g., 1980 and in the future e.g., 1985. The following tables gives an example of such a list.

FROM (1979) .....	TO (1985)
Politically isolated .....	Politically involved
Specialist .....	Generalist
Individual Services .....	Community Ed.; Econ. Dev.
Reactive .....	Anticipatory
Neighborhood Offices .....	Centralized
Scattered .....	Consolidated
Anarchy .....	Discipline; Teamwork
Open Door Policy .....	Targeted; Selective
Individual Advocacy .....	Cooperative Advocacy
Doer; Implementer .....	Teacher; Leader; Catalyst
One Program .....	Coalitions
General Appeals .....	Limited Appeals
Federal .....	State

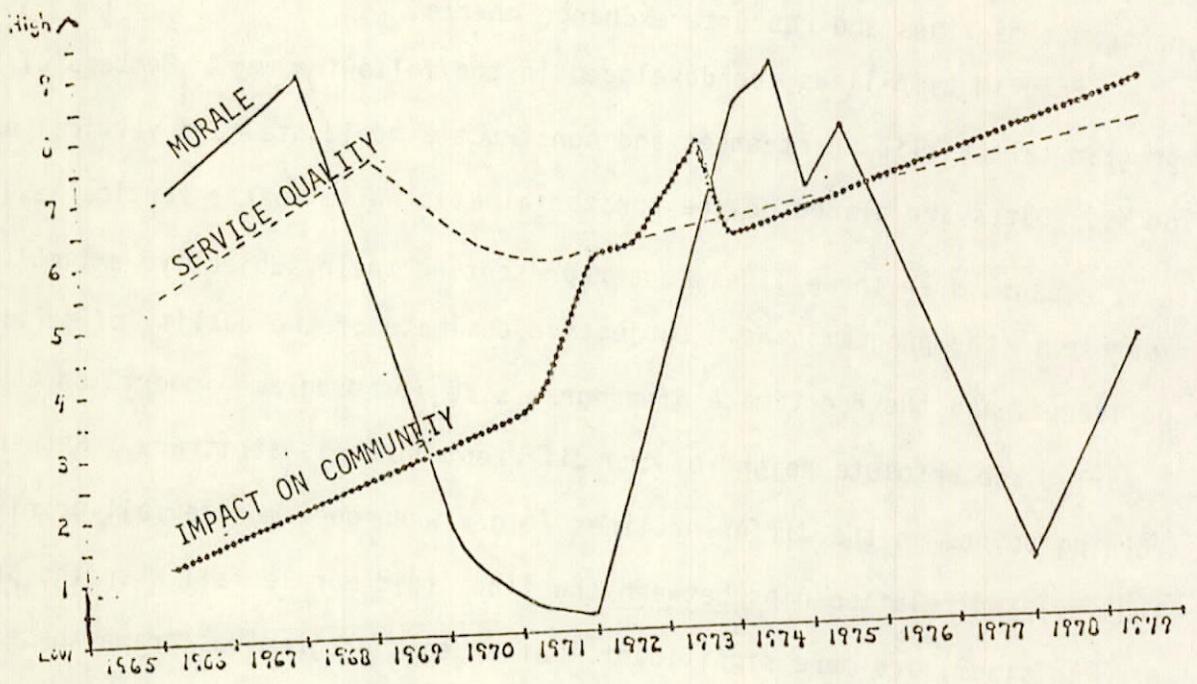
Thus, the above list points to new functions and structures which can inform the consolidation and consortium discussions. The shift from open door to targeted services may require cooperative programming across the region (e.g., "we will give up service 'X', can you run and advise a referral system for us in this substantive area. We in turn will support you in area 'Y'.) Similarly, the shift from political isolation to political involvement may require cross-program coalition building.

## The Second Stage

The first stage of consortium/consolidation discussions should be designed to a) clarify bottom lines and expectations, b) increase the appreciation for the shared environment, c) assess the future, and d) assess trends in program structure.

The second stage should be organized to increase participants awareness of each other's program structure and function. Two tools are helpful here, program time-lines and resource exchange charts.

Program time-lines are developed in the following way. Members of each program take a flip chart sheet and construct a horizontal and vertical axis on it. Dates are placed on the horizontal axis while on the vertical axis participants draw three lines, one representing their subjective estimate of the "morale in the program" their subjective estimate of the quality of service delivered, and their estimate of program size (or program "import" on the community). Clearly, the absolute height of the different lines is arbitrary. Rather, turning points in the different lines (e.g., when does morale fall or rise and why) and relationships between the lines (did morale fall when the program grew in size?) are more significant. After each program has drawn these lines, participants should move about the room looking at different time lines and talking with those who drew them. In this way conference participants can develop a reasonable understanding of the local history of each program. Such an understanding will again increase the group's appreciation of the problems and opportunities posed by consortium and consolidation.



After program participants are familiar with some of the key historical issues in each program represented at the conference, they can use resource exchange charts to deepen their understanding of the consortium/consolidation problem. Resource exchange charts are constructed in the following way. 45 minutes before a break, participants from each program fill out the following chart.

Program A

	Give to	Get From
Program X		
Program Y		
Program Z		

Thus, participants from program A fill out what they expect they can give to each program in a resource-exchange process and what they can get from each program. The resources exchanged should be defined broadly, ranging from expertise, and political ties on the one side to specific administrative services on the other. During the break the facilitators should take the set of sheets and construct the following summary sheet for each program.

PROGRAM A

	1	2	3	4
	what the program expects to give to you	what the program expects to get from you	what you expect to give to the program	what you expect to get from the program
rogram X	expertise in housing	fiscal management	housing experience	political ties to the commissioner
rogram Y	library support	CLE materials	CLE materials	support in most administrative areas

Program A will then review its summary sheet and will compare column one with column four and column two with column three. Thus, in the above example, Program A and Y have convergent expectations with respect to what A will give to Y. Y expects to receive CLE materials and X expects to give CLE materials. Looking, however, at columns one and four Y expects to give primarily support in library functions while A expects to get support in a much wider range of administrative areas. This array of differences may then establish a starting point for what are some of the best ways to think of such bilateral exchanges. Each participant gets a copy of all the charts.

The discussion is best organized in the following way. Each person gets a chance to talk and addresses the following questions. The review can be organized in through the following questions.

1. With regard to my chart, did I find any significant discrepancies? What do I think might account for these discrepancies?
2. With regard to my chart did I detect significant omissions i.e. certain possibilities were not mentioned by others when they thought of my program.
3. With regard to all the charts (and each participants gets all the charts) do I detect any significant resource exchange themes (e.g. administrative cost sharing versus failities sharing etc.), do I detect any significant omissions?

4. With regard to all the charts what themes/areas emerge as key priorities for our discussion on consortium and consolidation.

When one person responds to those question, others should feel free to talk and comment.

Thus for example in the above "from-to" resource exchange chart participants from prgram A and X may wish to discuss the source and meaning of their mismatched expectations. The dicussion in total should take a long time and may at time prove laborious, but it helps constitute a clear and concrete data base for thinking about the costs and benefits of different cooperative arrangements. It is also very important for the facilitators to keep very good notes of the dicussion on flip chart sheets. These notes then constitute the raw material for the next step of the discussion.

#### Extracting Themes

After each participant has talked, and conversation about each program's needs and expectations, is complete the group will have produced a broad range of ideas and on opportunities for an issues in cooperation. They should then step back and review their list of ideas (from the flip chart sheets) and produce a ten item list of "Key" opportunities for cooperating/sharing. The following is an example of such a list

1. Sharing and jointly developing community development expertise.
2. Developing a shared fiscal management systems.
3. Local programs purchasing computer systems that are compatible one with the other.
4. Developing more cooperative ties with the backup centers.
5. Organizing joint approaches to, and programs with the local bar.
6. Exploring a centralized telephone intake system for the region as a whole.
7. Joint production of C.L.E. materials.
8. Developing joint programs for upgrading the role of paralegals.
9. Examining relationships between cable technology and rural delivery issues.

10. Sharing access to state senators.

The groups can then ballot to create a list of the key five issues areas. This list can in turn serve as the starting point for the next stage of the discussion.

Denovo Design

The "from-to" charts are based on an incremental conception of consortium/consolidation arrangements. That is, program participants think of the many ways in which they can cooperate without committing to a special structure or configuration of cooperation (e.g. a fully consolidated program vs a confederation).

Such an incremental discussion can be informed by a parallel synoptic or "comprehensive redesign" discussion. The group can consider the following program. Assuming certain contextual conditions, and a particular sum of money, how might legal services delivery in this region be designed from scratch, e.g. without regard to the present system of delivery?

For this discussion to be fruitful it is important that participants have the following data at hand:

1. Present total legal services money in the region
2. Present total non-legal services money
3. Staffing patterns in each program
4. Approximate ratio of overhead expense to direct expense by program
5. The breakdown of overhead expense between rent and nonrent
6. The breakdown of direct expense between lawyer and paralegal, versus non-lawyer staff
7. The breakdown of non-lawyer direct expense (if only rough) between non-lawyer administrative and non-lawyer clerical
8. Number of clients served by program (cases closed -- following perhaps the CSR reporting format)
9. Poverty population in a program's service area.
10. Proportion of poor people served in a given area in a given year (rough estimate)

This set of data by program (and when aggregated, by the area as a whole) provides the group with a concrete sense of the parameters can help shape a

"good" design. Thus for example discussions about where to place offices should be informed by estimates of the distribution of poor people in the area and the costs of delivery in different areas, In my experience when such data are not available design discussions founder as participants try to create the appropriate numbers.

It is also helpful to specify some of the contextual conditions for the designing. Clearly the political environment, estimates of regional unemployment, the party in control of the state-house, senate and governorship should affect the final design. The following table represents just such a "scenario" of the relevant context.

Scenario

1. You have two million dollars to spend
2. Past history of program configuration and staffing is not a constraint on design
3. There is a "tough" LSC board, there are skirmishes over compliances, but continued funding of LSC is assumed. It is expected that funding will increase at a rate equal to half the inflation rate.
4. There is a Republican governor in your state
5. Unemployment stands at eleven percent in your region
6. Inflation is at 8% per year
7. There is continuing industrial decline in the region

In Your Design You Should Specify

1. The key activities
2. The key delivery modes
3. The location and relative sizes of offices
4. Office Staffing patterns
5. Patterns of sharing with respect to administrative, substantive and political activities

6. Governance Structure if any

Finally, in examining your design you should specify:

1. How the design increases the power of the "enabling forces" identified in your force field.
2. How it decreases the power of the "restraining forces."
3. How it is consonant with emergent changes in the structure of program delivery (see the "from-toward" list of stage one).
4. What incremental changes in program configuration might be undertaken now, which are consistent with and would help shape the denovo design.

There is usually inadequate time for the participants to both develop a discussion around the resource-exchange charts and also develop a denovo design. It is possible, however, for the group to divide itself into two groups (if sufficient numbers are attending the conference) where each group works for 5-6 hours on their problem and then both joint together for evening work to compare their results. In particular, the incremental steps suggested by point four in the table could be compared to the list of shared activities developed by the resource exchange groups. Such a comparison can produce a suggestive list of options, since the first is generated on the basis of considering an idealized future while the latter is constructed on the basis of current configurations. The integration of the two perspectives -- from the future-back, and from the present toward -- should reveal most of the possible options.

### Stage Three

After the whole group has produced its list of possible areas of exploration it should then break out into small groups where each group develops a charge to a task force to be appointed after the conference. Each task force would deal with the particular activity under consideration. The charge to this future task force should encompass the following points.

1. Specify the mission of the task force
2. Specify its scope and content area
3. What is the mandate of the task force, does it make decisions make a recommendation, or suggest options?
4. Who should be on it, what principle of representation is used to fill the task force positions?
5. How should individual programs contribute to task force work (\$, supplies, site, released time for work for staff, secretarial assistance)
6. What are the deadlines (e.g. first draft, last draft) what logic of reporting organizes the flow of work?
7. To whom does the tasks force report?
8. Who is responsible for considering a task force's recommendations or deciding among HS proposed options?
9. Who is in charge of the task force? Who worries if its work is not carried forward, who assists the person in charge? How do other task force members give support? How are these persons chosen for their roles?

Thus, and this is important to keep in mind, the small groups at the conference do not become the task forces to work on the details of the particular area/problem. Rather, they specify in detail the scope of future task forces and their deadlines for work. The following is a brief example of the report of such a group at a conference.

Area : Purchase of Computers Compatible with each Program's  
Current Investments and Future Computer Acquisitions

Mission: To insure that the evolution of computer capability in the different programs does not place limits on future cooperation between programs

Scope: To review current capital equipment in place, to develop a coordinated plan for future purchases, to suggest corrective actions where incompatibilities currently exist

Mandate: It should primarily make recommendations but suggest options when different solutions entail different distributions of costs and benefits among the programs

Who should be on it: Administrators from each program and staff within the region who have knowledge of the area. It should number no more than twelve

How should programs contribute: Released time once every two weeks, plus a site by program X for a day and half meeting at the beginning of its work

What are the deadlines: Give one report with recommendations and options on April 20. It should work out its own internal schedule of work

To Whom does the Task Force Report: The directors of the programs, but the report should circulate to all interested parties

Who is in charge: We recommend administrator A from program Y. He is

clearly the most knowledgeable in the area. He should search for an assistant. The recording function should circulate among the members of the task force. Mr. A should circulate a note to the directors requesting that they appoint one person from each program and list others who are interested. Mr. A will in turn confer with other interested people to select additional appointees. If the total number of program representatives and interested people does not exceed twelve then everybody may join the committee

On the basis of past experience I recommend that directors not be placed on each task force. First, they will have enough work reviewing task force recommendations, and second, the political and turf issues that may emerge at the decision point should not be impede the option making and recommendation process. It is better that the political issues of consortium and consolidation enter into discussion after the analytic work has been completed, and the best estimate of tradeoffs and the distribution of costs and benefits has been made. Finally, the deadlines are very important. Insofar as they are regarded as inviolate and directors make a commitment to supporting the work of the task forces, the task forces will meet their charge. But if deadlines are violated people will regard the work of the task force less seriously. Thus it is important to create realistic deadlines. If for example, program directors expect that other critical events will emerge in the course of task force work (e.g. closing down an office, an election etc.) then such events should be taken into account in setting deadlines.

### The Fishbowl

After the groups have produced their task force charges the entire group should meet as a whole to hear the report of each group. Participants should have the opportunity to ask questions about the task force charges to further clarify particular issues and problems. The directors should then convene a meeting in "fishbowl" form where they meet in an inner circle

to review the charges, and the rest of the group observes their discussion. The purpose of the fishbowl is to underline that:

1. as the conference ends the real work of negotiation between the programs is beginning. Thus the directors, who carry more political and juridical authority than other conference participants, should now review the work of the conference.
2. the directors will have a decisive impact on the flow of tasks force work and any resulting implementation. They must therefore be satisfied with the charges.
3. the directors and the group should experience some of the real tensions and differences that may emerge as the directors, begin to consider the issues of cooperation. As the directors and others experience these tensions in the context of the meeting they will be better prepared to carry the work of the meeting forward into the "real world."
4. meetings away from the time and space of the real world often create good feelings and commitments that cannot stand the test of reality. Thus, it is a good principle of design to put a slice of reality into the meeting so that all participants can experience the difference between the the "meeting high" and the constraints of the real world. With this experience in hand they are less prone to be disappointed when they meet up with these constraints (and are therefore less likely to discount its results) and are also more prepared to meet to constructively deal with them.

When the directors have completed their fishbowl meetings, it is useful for the group facilitators to type up and distribute the resulting set of charges to all participants. These set of charges on "black and white" constitute the contract between the participants on how they wish to carry the work of the conference forward.

## II. SOME GENERAL NOTES ON CONSOLIDATION/CONSORTIUM ARRANGEMENTS

In this last section I want to briefly examine three issues in managing a consortium process.

First, it is useful to think of consortium arrangements as part of a developmental process in which programs enter into arrangements which, if satisfactory, lead to a new and more developed ones. In this context certain activities or arrangements have more developmental potential than others. Thus, for example, agreements to arrange for joint purchasing of supplies is unlikely to create new opportunities so that new arrangements naturally or more spontaneously emerge. A shared telephone advice and referral system however, will more readily lead to new and more developed arrangements.

The difference between the two is clear. The former does not lie on a continuum of activity that leads to the core of the program -- the way in which it delivers a legal services, while the latter clearly does. Similarly, arrangements to share fiscal services, e.g., payroll and accounting, are less likely to lead to new arrangements than a system developing and managing a consortium case reporting system. The developmental activity can be either in direct legal work or in supporting activities, but they should be based on arrangements that may potentially lead to a progressive reconfiguration of the core activities of each program (if indeed such a reconfiguration is desired).

To be sure, programs may not wish to share activities with such a developmental potential, they may not have each other's political confidence and trust. But it is important to keep the above distinction in mind as a way of evaluating the meaning and

significance of any consortium arrangement. In general, it is likely that programs with a history of little cooperation will settle on some mix between the two kinds of arrangements so that the non-developmental ones provide some margin of safety within the consortium and the developmental ones indicate the degree to which program participants are willing to take risks. This mix of safety affirming and risk inducing activity may be optimal for such a set of programs.

Second, it is useful to think of programs sharing activities that are either compatible with one another or complementary with one another. Consortium arrangements that involve the former are most often undertaken to obtain economies of scale in the activity. Thus for example, programs will find it useful to jointly purchase resources, such as supplies, insurance, etc. when the resources they use in each of their programs are similar if not identical. On the other hand, programs can share activities that complement one another so that each activity enriches and/or improves the other. Thus for example, a rural program with experience in networking with local power elites to insure program survival may complement an urban program with a more aggressive posture toward power elites. If the two cooperated in a political coalition, the strength of each may increase the power and tactical efficiency of the others. Similarly, a program with skills in developing and disseminating community legal education material (due to low resource levels) may complement the litigation expertise of another. The former may provide the latter with effective listening posts to scan for emergent issues, while the latter may provide the former with new ideas about the way in which the intersections between the legal system and socio-economic system can be highlighted and elaborated through both education and advocacy. Compatible activities most often rationalize activities across programs while complementary ones often reorganize activities.

The former provides direct savings, the latter new avenues of activity and greater effective ones. Again, I suggest that programs look for a balance between the two using the former to generate dollar efficiencies and the latter to explore new strategies.

Finally, it is important to think of consortium arrangements that emerge from more informal as against more formal activities. Formal arrangements emerge when programs enter into explicit agreements to share resources or coordinate their activities. The former, in contrast, happens as networks of individuals come together outside the official juridicial umbrella of program to program arrangements to discuss common issues. An important example of the former is a learning network in which staff lawyers from the different programs agree to cooperate in the development of new knowledge and skills. This network may have formal program support (e.g., helping to sponsor kick-off events, local conferences, etc.) but the driving force behind the network and its evolution depends on the interests of particular individuals who act outside of their official roles and "power positions."

These three distinctions, developmental/non-developmental, compatible-complementary, formal-informal are summarized below.

Criterion	Determining Features
developmental- non-developmental	closeness to core activity
compatible-complementary	degree to which programs seek cost efficiency as against new ways to be effective
formal-informal	degree to which individuals do not need program sanction to sustain their cooperative activity

Below is a sample schedule for a consortium/consolidation conference.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Time Slot	Activity	Approximate time
Evening day one	Expectations, bottom lines, program time-lines	3 hours
Morning day two	Force Field, From-Towards	2 hours
Morning day one	Fill out from-to resources exchanges chart	45 mins.
Afternoon day two	Resource Exchange discussion in one group* Denovo Design in another (facilitators have prepared data materials, and scenario conditions)	4-5 hours
Evening day two	Report on the work of the two groups comparison of priority lists, creation of joint lists	2-3 hours
Morning day three	Groups formed to produce task force charges	2 hours
Morning day three	Groups report on their charges	1 hour
Afternoon day three	Fishbowl directors meeting	2 hours

The Appendix that follows contains:

1. Notes on the Nominal Group Technique
2. Notes of Force Field Analyst

\*Facilitators should practice creating the composite from-to charts. They need scissors, tape, Xerox and patience.

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

PURPOSE

1. To organize more productive meetings especially for problem identification, problem-solving, and program planning.
2. To balance and increase participation and reduce errors in group decisions.

SUMMARY

Meetings within organizations are not always productive. Most managers feel that much of their time which is taken up in meetings is not well spent. Nominal Group Technique is a way of organizing a meeting to enhance its productivity. Its purpose is to balance and increase participation, to use different processes for different phases of creative problem solving and to reduce the errors in aggregating individual judgments into group decisions. It is especially useful for problem identification, problem-solving and program planning.

PROCESS

Small group meeting process.

TIME

2-3 hours for the full step-by-step process, although the silent generation and balloting of ideas can be used strategically in a wide variety of situations, taking relatively little time, e.g., for quick agenda setting.

NUMBERS

6-12, larger groups can work in subgroups on the same topic or on different topics depending on the situation. The results can later be shared.

REFERENCES

Delbecq, Andre L., Van de Ven, Andrew H. and Gustafson, David H. Group Techniques for Program Planning, a Guide to Nominal Group Technique and Delphi Processes, Scott Foreman, 1975.

Delbecq, Andre L. and Van de Ven, Andrew H., "A Group Process Model for Identification and Program Planning," Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, 1971, 7, pp. 466-492.

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE (NGT)\*

It has been estimated that as much as 50-80% of a manager's time is spent in group meetings. Most managers, however, feel that much of this time is not spent effectively. Many problems are encountered by groups in trying to generate ideas, encourage high member involvement, and maintain agendas and time schedules. Very often, some group members are excluded from active participation for a number of good, and frequently not so good, reasons. In other situations, discussion is monopolized by a few group members with meeting outcomes often not accurately reflecting the group's opinion. As the meeting progresses everyone either talks or listens. There is not time for people to think through the issues at hand.

To counter many of these problems, Andre Delbecq and Andrew Van de Ven developed Nominal Group Technique (NGT). Because the process is relatively easy to learn, it can be used immediately by participants in their organizations. They easily can teach these skills to other organization members. Participants often quickly realize the benefits of NGT once they have used it a few times and apply NGT to a variety of other contexts - client meetings, for example.

The name, Nominal Group Technique, describes how the process works. It is a process for a group of people who become a group in name only (hence the name, nominal group) when they are using the technique. The purpose of NGT is to eliminate social and psychological dynamics of group behavior which tend to inhibit individual creativity and participation in group decisions. For the time that the group uses the technique they avoid the normal problems of a few individuals doing all the talking, the rest listening, and very few people taking the time to actually think about the issue at hand. Individuals can be more creative and everyone is given a structured opportunity to participate. This helps to overcome these common problems often encountered in small group meetings organized for the purpose of generating ideas, planning programs, and problem solving.

The following outline lists each step of NGT along with ways in which that step contributes to better meetings and decisions. This listing will help to clarify how and why NGT works. The procedures for each step are explained in the next section.

A. SILENT GENERATION OF IDEAS IN WRITING

1. Provides time to think
2. Provides a creative setting

---

\*This material is a summary and adaptation from Delbecq, Andre L., Van de Ven, Andrew H., and Gustafson, David H., Group Techniques for Program Planning, A Guide to Nominal Group Technique and Delphi Processes, Scott Foreman, 1975, pp. 40-82.

3. Provides focus and uninterrupted thought
4. Encourages each member to search for ideas
5. Avoids competition and status differences
6. Avoids conformity pressures
7. Avoids evaluation and closure
8. Avoids polarizing on ideas

B. RECORDED ROUND-ROBIN LISTING OF IDEAS ON CHART

1. Structures equal sharing and participation
2. Encourages problem-mindedness
3. Encourages each member to build on other members' ideas
4. Depersonalizes ideas
5. Tolerates conflicting ideas
6. Reinforces concentration: hear and see ideas
7. Provides written permanence

C. DISCUSSION AND CLARIFICATION OF EACH IDEA ON CHART

1. Each idea is as important as another
2. Equal time to each idea
3. Clarifies ideas

D. PRELIMINARY VOTE ON PRIORITIES

1. Provides focus on important issues
2. Structures equality in choices
3. Allows a "trial run"
4. Avoids a premature decision
5. Avoids dominance by strong members

E. DISCUSSION OF PRELIMINARY VOTE

1. Clarifies misunderstandings
2. Encourages minority opinions
3. Promotes "criticizing" ideas on wall - not people
4. Provides preparation for decision

F. FINAL VOTE ON PRIORITIES

1. Structures an independent judgment from each member
2. Provides closure
3. Promotes sense of accomplishment
4. Motivates involvement in future phases of planning and problem-solving
5. Provides a written record of the ideas generated

The Process

PREPARATION: A SUCCESSFUL NGT EXPERIENCE DEPENDS ON CAREFUL PLANNING AND PREPARATION BY THE FACILITATOR.

In the NGT process people will be responding to an initial question by the NGT leaders. The nature and quality of the response

will be determined as much by the nature of the question as it is by the NGT process itself. An effective leader should decide on the kind of information he really wants. It is a good idea to pretest the question before the meeting. Remember, global questions stimulate global answers. Affectional, emotional information is obtained only by asking for it directly.

The composition of the group will also depend on important pre-process decisions. From whom is information desired, and what are the objectives of the meeting? Remember a heterogeneous group provides different perspectives on a given situation. A homogeneous group reduces communication barriers, but may simply reinforce accepted ideas, i.e., result in "group think." The quality of the meeting's output will depend on the composition of the group.

STEP 1: SILENT GENERATION OF IDEAS IN WRITING.

10-20 minutes

The leader presents the nominal question to the group in written form. Then he verbally reads the question. He asks each member of the group to take five minutes to list their ideas in response to the question in brief phrases on a piece of paper. The leader requests the group members work silently and independently.

STEP 2: RECORDED ROUND-ROBIN LISTING OF IDEAS ON CHART

20-40 minutes

Each member of the group is asked by the leader to read one of his ideas in turn. The leader writes each idea on the flipchart as it is read. This procedure continues around the table enough times for each member to exhaust his list.

STEP 3: A VERY BRIEF DISCUSSION AND CLARIFICATION OF EACH IDEA ON THE CHART

20-40 minutes

Each idea listed on the chart is discussed in order. The leader points to each idea beginning with the first, reads it out loud, and asks the group if there are any questions, statements of clarification, or statements of agreement or disagreement which members would like to make about it.

STEP 4: PRELIMINARY VOTE ON PRIORITIES: SILENT, INDEPENDENT

10 minutes

- 1) The leader asks the group to select from the entire list of ideas on the flip chart a specific number (5-7 is best) of "priority" or most important items.
  - a) he asks each member to place each priority item on a separate 3 X 5 card.

- b) after members have their set of priority cards completed, the leader asks them to rank-order the cards, one at a time.
- 2) The leader collects the cards and records the vote on a flip chart in front of the group.

Index Card Illustrating Rank-Order Voting Process

Number from the  
flip chart  
list of ideas

<p>5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The idea written out</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <u>1</u>        -        -     </p>
---

Number indicating rank-order

STEP 5: MEETING BREAK (COFFEE, COKE, ETC.)

STEP 6: DISCUSSION OF THE PRELIMINARY VOTE

20-40 minutes

The purpose of this discussion is to examine inconsistent voting patterns and to provide for the opportunity to rediscuss items which are perceived as receiving too many or too few votes.

STEP 7: FINAL VOTE ON PRIORITIES: SILENT INDEPENDENT

10 minutes

Repeat step 4 to determine a final list of group priorities. If desired, a more refined voting technique such as rating may be used here.

STEP 8: LISTING AND AGREEMENT ON PRIORITIZED ITEMS

The results from step 7 are listed on the flip chart to provide a permanent record of the groups agreement.

Supplementary Information

Group Size: 7-9 people is the ideal size. 11 people is the absolute maximum.

Larger groups should be divided into groups of 7-9 for the process.

Materials Needed: The following materials are absolutely essential:

1. A flip chart or newsprint for each group.
2. Roll of masking tape.
3. Pack of 3 X 5 cards for each table.
4. Felt pens for each table.
5. Paper and pencil for each participant.

- Physical Setting:
1. Meeting room with table to accommodate groups of 5-9 members.
  2. If more than one group meets in the same room, it is important that the tables be spaced far enough apart so that the noise and activity at one table does not interfere with other tables.
  3. It is helpful to seat participants at a rectangular table arranged as an open U with the flip chart at the open end of the table.

- Time:
1. Varies with the complexity of material and the way in which the technique is adapted to the setting (1 - 2½ hours).
  2. A single highly productive meeting is better than a series of shorter unproductive meetings.

### Uses and Abuses

1. NGT is best used for small group meetings called for the purpose of fact-finding, idea generation, or the search of problems or solutions. It is not for routine business, bargaining, predetermined outcome, or groups requiring consensus.
2. Once this technique becomes familiar, some steps will seem more important than others in different situations. For instance, clarification is more important when people in the group do not know one another or are from different backgrounds.
3. Formal balloting may not be necessary for relatively simple issues or for agenda setting when only a small number of topics emerge.
4. It is often difficult to convince people to use NGT for the first time. The usual question is, "Why is all this structure necessary?" Explanations help to overcome this resistance, but a successful experience helps much more. It is a good idea to try out the process on an issue that can be covered completely in one meeting so that the group can sense the value of the entire process.
5. During early experiences using NGT, it is most difficult for people to keep from discussing issues before all points are listed, clarified, and prioritized. So, extra care must be taken by the facilitator to prevent discussion from starting too soon.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

PURPOSE

1. To increase group understanding of factors causing a particular problem.
2. To facilitate the creation of more effective group strategies for managing problems.

SUMMARY

In trying to solve a problem, groups often move too rapidly toward a strategy, argue, polarize, and fail to look at all of the causal factors behind the problem. Force Field Analysis is a way to prevent this. The process encourages full participation in diagnosing and understanding the factors causing a particular problem. It allows the group to discover innovative approaches to solving the problem through viewing it as a system of social forces. The process can be fruitfully applied to a wide variety of substantive issues ranging from individual management problems such as poor delegation to system issues such as low utilization of some new program.

PROCESS

Small group led by a facilitator.

TIME

Two to three hours on organizational problems or those of a small group. Larger problems and larger groups using this method may take longer. Creating the image of forces can be done within an hour but the full benefits come from working through to action strategies.

NUMBERS

From a single individual to small groups (6-7 is ideal). Can be used very effectively with many groups working in parallel and criticizing each other. Also appropriate for larger groups in general problem solving sessions.

REFERENCES

- Lewin, K., Resolving Social Conflicts, Harper and Row, 1938.  
Lewin, K., Field Theory in Social Sciences, Harper and Row, 1951.  
Naper and Gershenfeld, Groups: Theory and Experience, Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

## FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Often using a group method to solve problems is not productive. More heads are not always better than one although they should be. There are three major ways in which groups fail to fully appreciate and deal with a problem. First, groups often move too rapidly toward a strategy. Someone introduces a good idea and everyone "jumps on the bandwagon." Other possibilities are not explored and the group often has not analyzed fully the problem. Second, members polarize around competing strategies. People may come to the group with a preconceived strategy. Coalitions form around competing ideas. The energy of the group is spent in arguing and group politics rather than analysis of the problem. Third, the group fails to identify some significant causal factors behind the problem, increasing the risk that the strategy may be inappropriate to the problem.

This method of problem solving involves everyone in the group in a process of diagnosing a particular problem, identifying the factors which cause it and understanding its dynamics. The process encourages everyone in the group to search for innovative approaches for managing the problem. It allows the group to examine the ways that changes in one part of the problem can influence the whole problem. As part of the group everyone shares a point of view built slowly during the process and moves together toward a strategy based on a full appreciation of the problem and the system of forces from which it arises.

### PROCESS

Introduction: Force field analysis is based on the concept of social field theory. Any situation of interest to a person or group is the result of social forces acting on it. These forces push on the situation from opposite directions. The situation does not change when the social forces counterbalance each other or sum to zero. When one set of forces is more powerful than the other set, it will push the situation in the direction of its force and the situation will change.

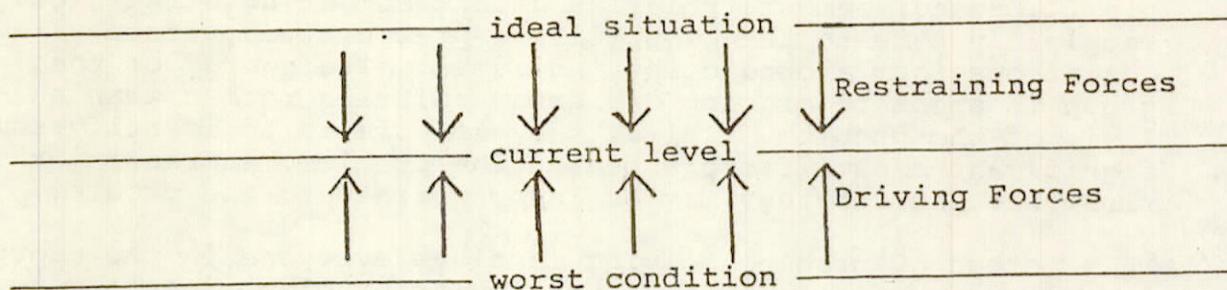
To clarify a given situation using force field analysis it is important to identify these forces and work with them in analyzing the situation and developing strategies to manage it.

One set of forces are called restraining forces. They are pushing against the current situation toward the worst possible conditions of the situation. If these forces were unopposed they would eventually cause the situation to become the worst possible condition.

Restraining forces are opposed to driving forces. Driving forces push toward the best possible condition of the current situation, the ideal. If these forces were unopposed they would eventually cause the situation to become the ideal state.

The situation exists in its current state because these forces are in equilibrium, counterbalancing one another.

Graphically these concepts can be portrayed as below:



Using force field analysis, the objectives are:

- 1) Identify the two sets of forces that are acting on the situation of interest.
- 2) Reduce the power and number of as many of the restraining forces as possible.
- 3) Increase the power and number of as many of the driving forces as possible.

Each step in the process can be built around the following questions.

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION (WHAT IS), WHAT IS THE IDEAL SITUATION (WHAT OUGHT TO BE), AND WHAT IS THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION (WHAT COULD BE)?

STEP 1: The group should begin the process by asking the above question and coming to an agreement on the answer. This is an important step because it creates a framework for the rest of the work. By discussing these ideas the group better understands the nature of the situation. Developing a shared definition of an ideal is difficult and helps to clarify the different values in the group. Creating the worst possible scenario is especially powerful in helping the group to deal with values that are often left unstated in group problem solving. For instance the group might easily agree that an agency was not given a clear delegation of responsibility but what is the worst case? Is it that the agency clearly be given no responsibility at all,

or that it be given too much responsibility? Dealing with this kind of question encourages the group to examine explicitly how the situation would get worse and thereby makes them aware of potential unintended consequences of their interventions. The ideal state, present condition, and worst case should be written on a flipchart in front of the group.

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE RESTRAINING FORCES WHICH PUSH ON THE CURRENT SITUATION TOWARD THE WORST CASE?

STEP 2: By brainstorming or using Nominal Group Technique, list as specifically as possible the restraining forces. Draw arrows on the flipchart and label them with a phrase or descriptive word. List as many as you can - do not debate at this point whether something is or is not valid. Get it down first, then go back and be more selective. A group should identify at least fifteen restraining forces.

Restraining forces are especially important. Social field theory argues that change is easier to initiate by reducing restraining forces rather than increasing driving forces. This is because the addition of a driving force will often result in increased effort by a restraining force. For example advertisements against smoking resulted in increased campaigns by cigarette companies. Removing a restraining force may elicit no response in reaction and thereby the existing force will naturally move the current condition in the desired direction.

QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE DRIVING FORCES WHICH ARE PUSHING THE SITUATION TOWARD THE IDEAL STATE?

STEP 3: Same process as in Step 2. At this point it might be helpful to point out that the driving forces (or restraining forces too) are not simply arguments for or against a particular policy or situation. They are existing social conditions which influence the present situation. For example "better communication" is not a driving force to improve organizational design. Rather it is the frustration of members of the organization who do not receive information essential to do their work, or the motivation by members of the organization to improve communication because they want to attain certain organizational or personal goals.

QUESTION 4: OVER WHICH DRIVING AND RESTRAINING FORCES DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE INFLUENCE AND WHICH OF THESE ARE MOST IMPORTANT NOW?

STEP 4: Circle these arrows and, if desired, prioritize these forces on the basis of how much influence over them you feel that you have (i.e., those over which you feel you have the most influence, less influence and the least influence).

From the information generated by Steps 1-4, the group can create a strategy for change.

QUESTION 5: FOR EACH RESTRAINING FORCE AND DRIVING FORCE THAT IS SUBJECT TO YOUR INFLUENCE, WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS THAT THE GROUP CAN TAKE?

STEP 5: Formulate a strategy by listing specific action steps according to the following questions:

1. Who will do what?
2. What exactly will be done?
3. Where it will be carried out?
4. When it will be done?
5. How it will be augmented?

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Materials Needed:

1. Force Field Sheet (supplied with this handout - optional)
2. Action Steps Planning Sheet (supplied with this handout - optional)
3. Newsprint and markers to record ideas as they come from the group.

## USES AND ABUSES

1. Force Field Analysis is an effective problem-solving tool for individuals and groups. It encourages an attitude which is open, searching, and oriented toward implementation of a solution as well as the analysis of a problem.
2. It is a good idea to practice using Force Field Analysis first on an issue that is not controversial for the group at that moment. This will allow the group to appreciate the value of the whole process.
3. Once Force Field Analysis has been introduced into the organization, it should not be trivialized by constantly using it on every problem that arises. It is a powerful analytical tool, but very time consuming. It is best saved for the most difficult organizational problems.
4. From the many applications of Force Field that we have experienced, we have identified some common problems in using the technique. They are listed below to help you avoid them in using the process.
  - a. Too little time is often spent on defining the ideal, assuming that we all know what we want when in fact there is considerable disagreement over what is desired and consensus only around the opposition to the existing state of affairs.
  - b. The ideal is too often stated too concretely as a preferred solution (e.g., a meeting every month of all shift commanders) rather than as a goal (clear and shared understanding across shifts) which could be achieved by a variety of different means.
  - c. Some groups tend to identify the driving forces as "good" and restraining as "bad," thereby polarizing. Force Field is intended to prevent this. Most situations result from a complex interplay of positive and negative driving and restraining forces. After setting down the driving and restraining forces, one should have achieved some understanding of why the situation is the way it is. A variant of this problem is seeing one's own forces as "good" (e.g., desire to participate) and others as "bad" (e.g., desire to control).

- d. Forces are often too vaguely stated (e.g., "resistance to change") instead of specifically stated (e.g., teachers' resistance to taking on security responsibilities). The more specifically the forces are stated the easier strategies to change them can be developed.
- e. Driving forces (those tending to improve a situation) are often stated as either possible solutions or desired attributes of the ideal rather than real present forces. For example, "less time consuming" is not a driving force to make staff meetings effective. Rather it is the existing frustration at the time wasted that is the driving force. As above, if stated clearly, strategies can be developed to increase or decrease the force in question.
- f. During the process of identifying driving and restraining forces, most groups evaluate and discuss rather than first identify as many forces as possible. Suspension of evaluation is the key to brainstorming.

Ideal Situation:

Restraining Force



Current Situation:

Driving Force



Worst Situation:

